



NO. 54 1920H 04

Great Sanskrit Plays



3 Illustrated Classics from India
Ratnavali • Udayana • Vasantasena



Illustrated Classics From India

Ratnavali A Sanskrit Play

The story Ratnavali is attributed to Emperor Harsha, who ruled from Kanauj in the 7th century AD. Princess Ratnavali of Simhala is shipwrecked en route to Kaushambi where she was going in order to marry King Udayana, her betrothed. The king's wise minister, Yaugandhiyayana, recognises her, but to bide for time he enlists her to Queen Vasavadatta, her own cousin, as a maid named Sogenika.

King Harsha was a great patron of art and literature. Renowned Sanskrit poets like Banu Bhatta were in his court. Harsha himself was a poet and playwright. He wrote three Sanskrit plays: Nagananda, Priyadarshika and Ratnavali.

Harsha obtained material for these plays from Gunadhya's Brihatkatha, which was a treasure house of stories. Ratnavali and Priyadarshika have similar plots. Udayana, the legendary king of Kaushambi, is the hero in both plays. Stories of King Udayana and Queen Vasavadatta were well-known in the world of ancient Indian literature. Harsha was adept at contriving dramatic situations and intrigue. This earned him the title *Nipuna Kavi* or the skillful poet.

Script: Subba Rao Illustrations: Pratap Mulick

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RATNAVALI



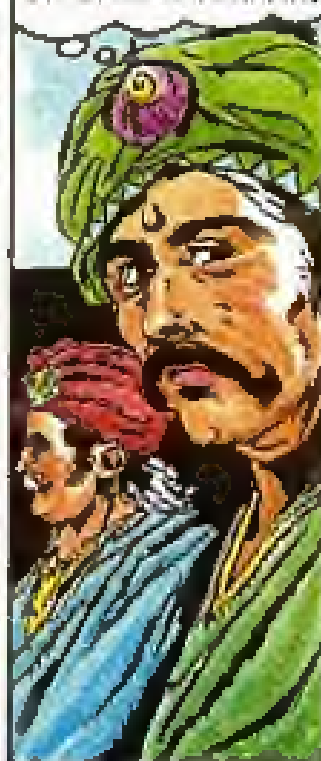
PRINCESS RATNAVALI, THE DAUGHTER OF VIKRAMABAHU, KING OF SIMHALA, WAS GOING TO KAUSHAMBI TO MARRY KING UDAYANA.

VASUBHUTI, THE KING'S MINISTER, WHO WAS ESCORTING RATNAVALI, TURNED TO BABHRAVA, THE ENVOY FROM KAUSHAMBI.

OUR KING WAS SAD TO HEAR THAT HIS NIECE, KING UDAYANA'S QUEEN, VASAVADATTA, DIED IN THE FIRE AT LAVANAKA.



SO KING VIKRAMABAHU BELIEVES THE RUMOUR SPREAD BY THE MINISTER YAGANDHARAYANA!



TO KEEP THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO FAMILIES ALIVE, HE HAS AGREED TO SEND OUR PRINCESS TO KAUSHAMBI.



HOW WILL HE REACT WHEN HE DISCOVERS THAT VASAVADATTA IS VERY MUCH ALIVE?

YOUNG RATNAVALI WAS THINKING ABOUT VASAVADATTA AND KING UDMYANA.

MY COUSIN, WHOM I HAVE NEVER MET, IS DEAD. THE KING LOVED HER DEEPLY. WILL I BE ABLE TO WIN HIS HEART?

SUDDENLY —

WHAT'S HAPPENING? THE SHIP HAS STARTED TO ROLL!

A SUDDEN STORM HAD BEGUN. THE HUGE WAVES TOSSED THE SHIP ABOUT...

HELP!

...AND IT BROKE INTO A THOUSAND PIECES.

OH GOD!

RATNAVALI MANAGED TO CLUTCH
A PLANK...



... AND KEEP AFLOAT.



FORTUNATELY, SOON AFTER,
SHE SPOTTED ANOTHER SHIP.



THE MASTER OF THE SHIP, A MERCHANT WHO
WAS SAILING TO KAUSHAMBI, HEARD THE CRY.



HE ORDERED THE SHIP TO TURN
AROUND TOWARDS HER...



... AND HELPED HER ABOARD.



WHO ARE YOU?



RATNAVALI REMAINED SILENT.

HOW CAN I TELL HIM THAT I AM THE PRINCESS OF SIMHALA? SEEING ME IN MY PRESENT STATE, WOULD HE BELIEVE ME?

WHY DOESN'T SHE ANSWER? IS SHE SUFFERING FROM A LOSS OF MEMORY?



ANYWAY FROM THE NECKLACE OF PRECIOUS STONES SHE IS WEARING, IT IS CLEAR THAT SHE IS A LADY OF NOBLE BIRTH.



MEANWHILE AT KAUSHAMBI, YAGANDHARAYANA, KING UDAYANA'S LOYAL MINISTER, WAS ANXIOUSLY PACING UP AND DOWN HIS CHAMBER.

PRINCESS RATNAVALI WILL SOON BE HERE. AND I HAVE NOT YET SPOKEN TO THE KING ABOUT HER.



HE LOVES VASAVADATTA TOO MUCH. HE WILL NOT AGREE TO MARRY ANOTHER WOMAN AND YET....



JUST THEN A GUARD ENTERED.

BRING HIM IN

SIR, A MERCHANT WANTS TO MEET YOU.



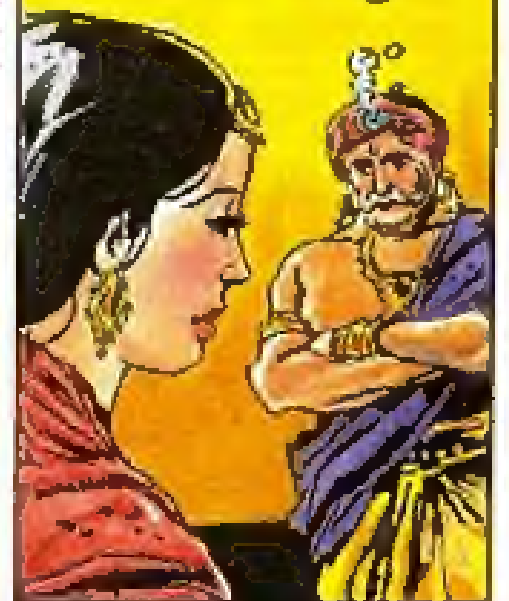
THE MERCHANT WALKED IN, BRINGING RATNAVALI WITH HIM.

SIR, I RESCUED THIS LADY FROM A SHIP-WRECK. I DON'T KNOW WHO SHE IS, BUT COULD I ENTRUST HER TO YOUR CARE?

THAT NECKLACE! SHE MUST BE RATNAVALI!



I WILL NOT LET HER SEE THAT I KNOW WHO SHE IS. I WILL TAKE HER TO THE QUEEN AND....





QUEEN VASAVADATTA LOOKED AFFECTIONATELY AT THE GIRL.



YOU ARE VERY KIND. PERMIT ME TO TAKE YOUR LEAVE.

VASAVADATTA DID NOT KNOW THAT SAGARIKA WAS NONE OTHER THAN RATNAVALI, HER COUSIN.

AS YALIGANDHARAYANA LEFT —



EXCELLENT! RATNAVALI IS NOW BOUND TO COME ACROSS THE KING AND THEN I WILL LET MATTERS TAKE THEIR OWN COURSE.

VASAVADATTA TURNED TO SAGARIKA.



MY FRIEND, I WANT YOU TO BE HAPPY HERE. YOU SHALL BE IN CHARGE OF MEDHAVINI, OUR BELOVED TALKING-BIRD. SUSANOATA WILL SHOW YOU WHERE IT IS.

SAGARIKA WAS HAPPY AND ENJOYED HER LIGHT DUTIES.

THE QUEEN IS
KIND AND
GENTLE.



THEN CAME THE FESTIVAL OF
MADANA, THE GOD OF LOVE.

SAGARIKA,
TODAY THE
QUEEN WILL
WORSHIP
MADANA IN
THE GARDEN.

O SUSANGATA,
I WOULD LOVE
TO BE THERE,
BUT I HAVE TO
LOOK AFTER
MEDHAVINI.

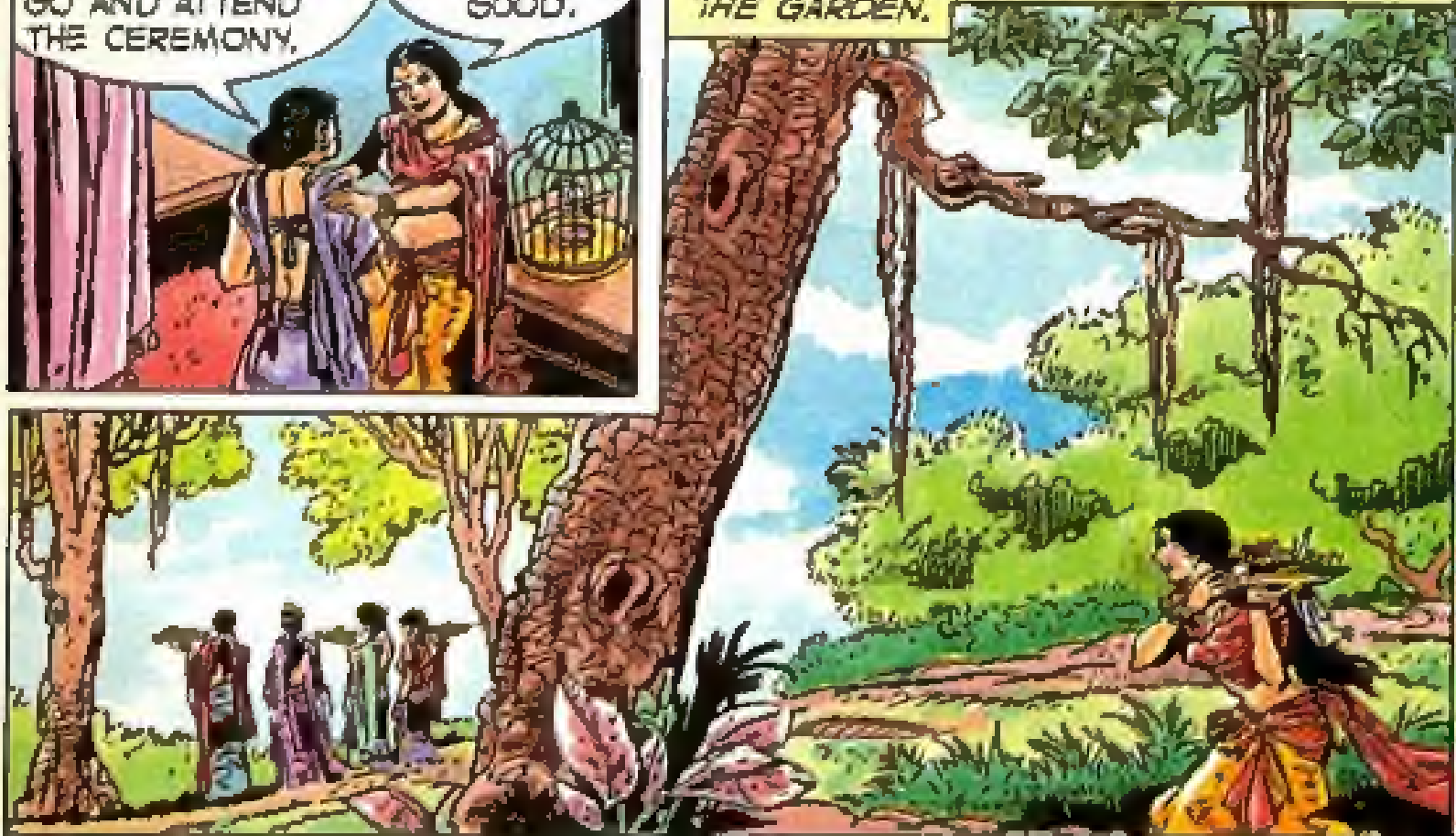


I WILL DO THAT
FOR YOU, SAGARIKA.
GO AND ATTEND
THE CEREMONY.

SUSANGATA,
YOU ARE SO
GOOD.



SO CARRYING MATERIALS FOR WORSHIP,
SAGARIKA FOLLOWED THE QUEEN INTO
THE GARDEN.



MEANWHILE, PEOPLE WERE OUT IN THE STREETS, CELEBRATING THE FESTIVAL BY THROWING COLOURS AT ONE ANOTHER. FROM THE PALACE KING UDAYANA WATCHED THE MERRY-MAKING WITH VASANTAKA, THE COURT JESTER



JUST THEN TWO OF THE QUEEN'S MAIDS ENTERED.

VICTORY TO YOUR MAJESTY! THE QUEEN COMMANDS... NO, NO... THE QUEEN REQUESTS....

THE WORD 'COMMANDS' IS MORE APPROPRIATE ON MADANA'S FESTIVAL. TELL ME WHAT THE QUEEN COMMANDS.

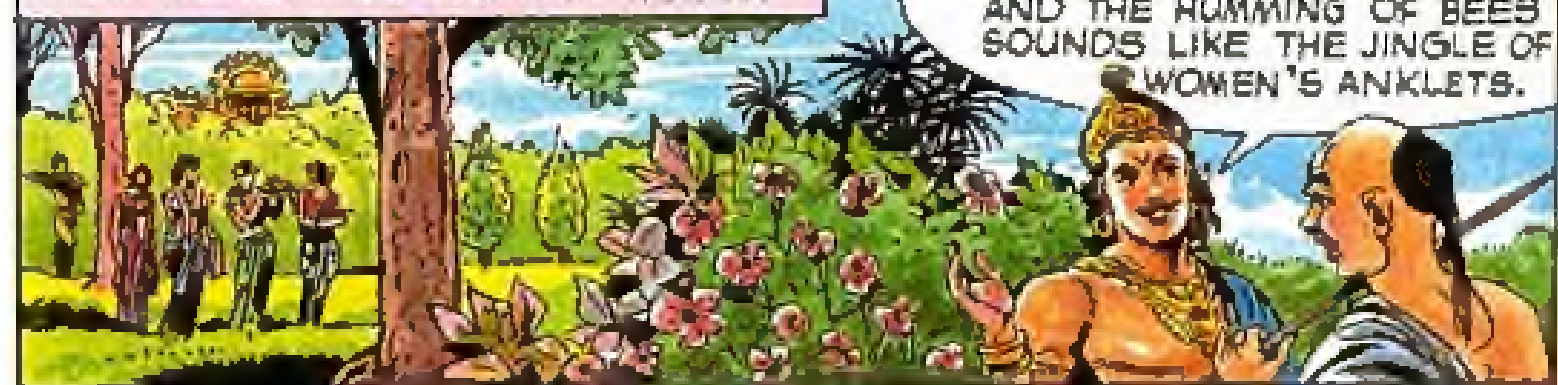


THE QUEEN REQUESTS YOUR PRESENCE AT MAKARANDA GARDEN WHERE SHE WILL BE WORSHIPPING THE GOD OF LOVE.

WE WILL COME AT ONCE.



WHEN THE KING REACHED THE GARDEN—

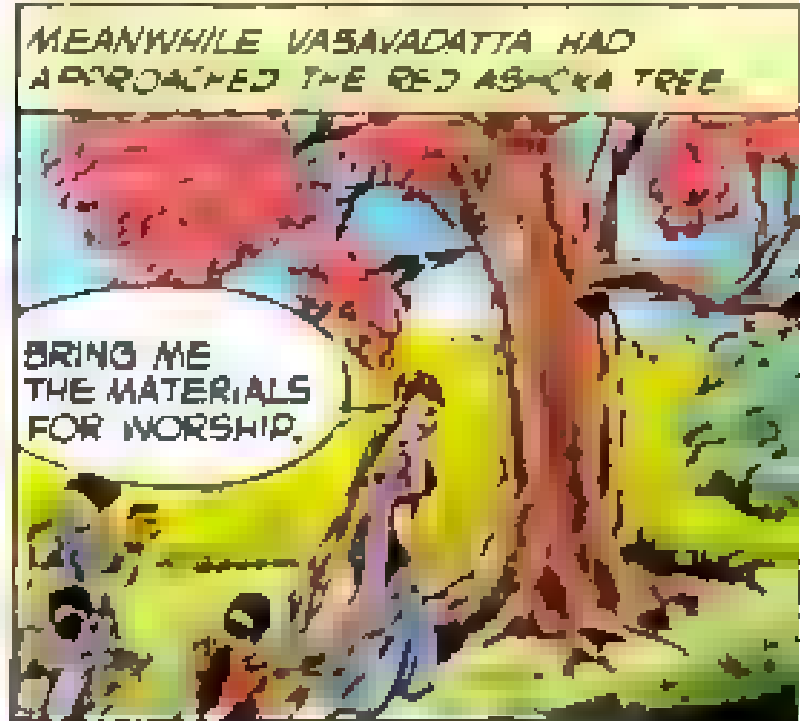


FRIEND, FLOWERS ARE IN BLOOM AND THE HUMMING OF BEES SOUNDS LIKE THE JINGLE OF WOMEN'S ANKLETS.



YOU ARE
RIGHT,
VASANTAKA.
I SEE THEM
COMING.

THAT SOUND IS NOT
CAUSED BY BEES BUT BY
THE ANKLETS OF THE
QUEEN'S COMPANIONS!



BRING ME
THE MATERIALS
FOR WORSHIP.

MEANWHILE VASAVADATTA HAD
APPROACHED THE RED ASHOKA TREE



SAGARIKA STEPPED FORWARD.

HERE THEY ARE,
YOUR MAJESTY.

HOW DID
SAGARIKA
GET HERE?
THE KING
MUST NOT
SEE HER!



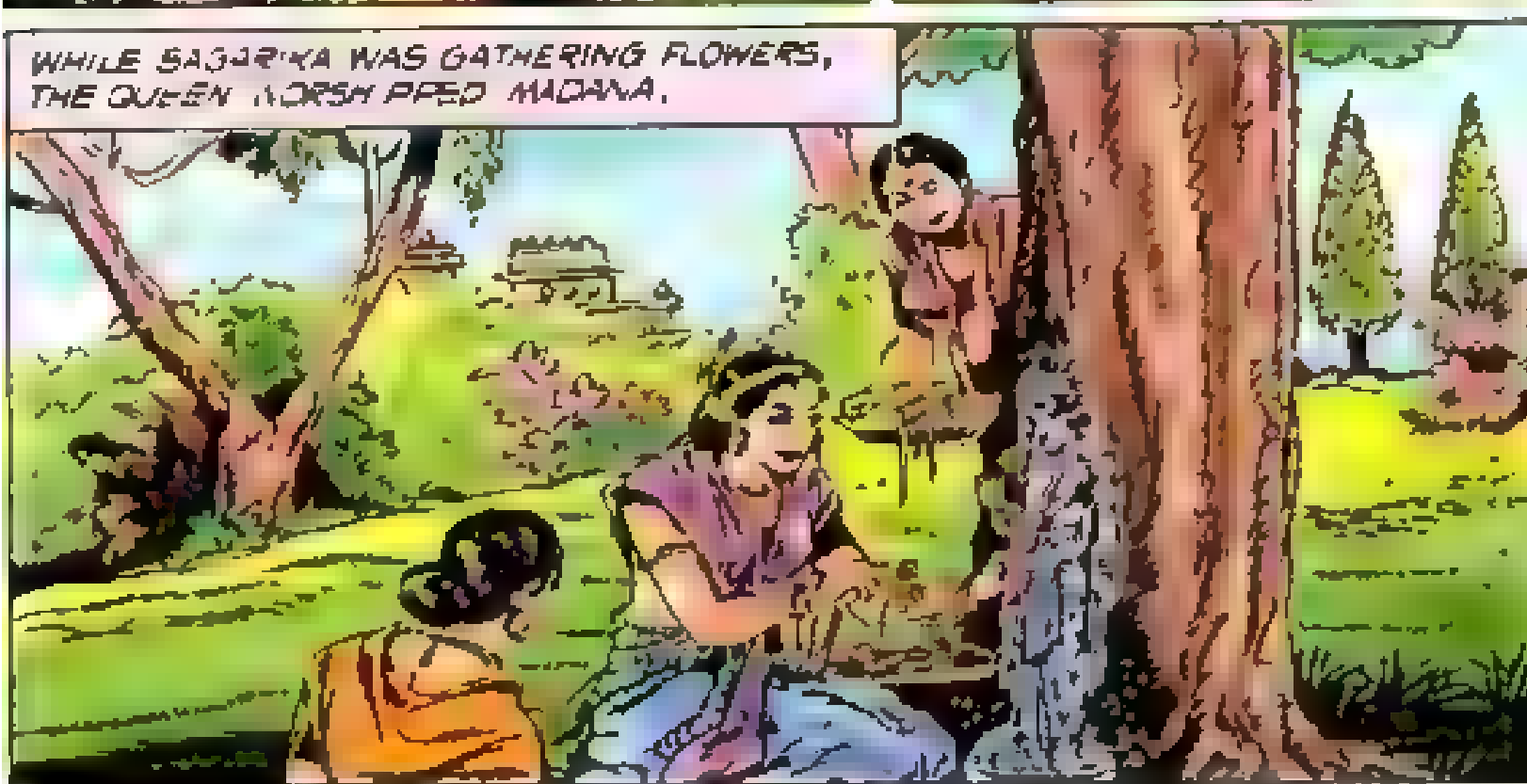
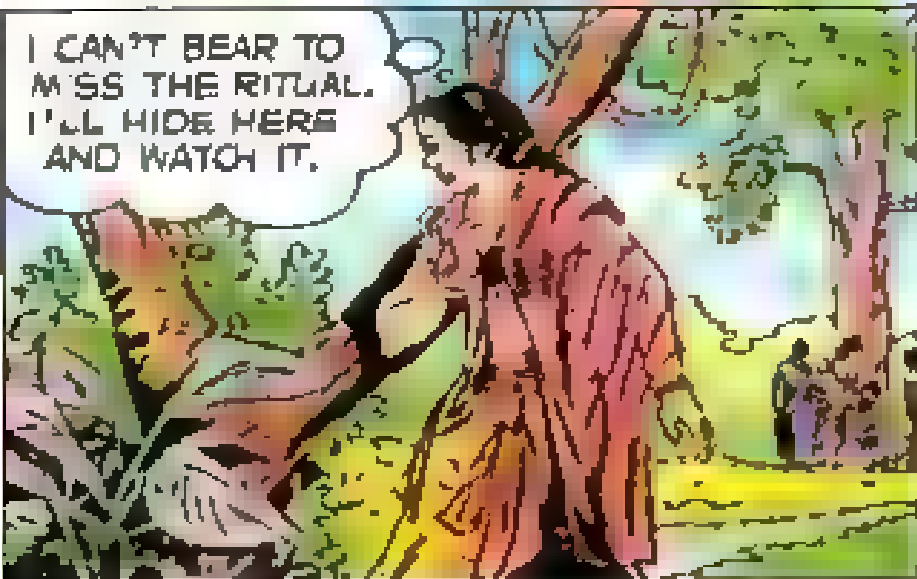
YES,
YOUR
MAJESTY

SAGARIKA, YOU
SHOULD NOT HAVE
LEFT MEETING IN
G.I.E THAT TRAM TO
KANCHANA NALA
AND GO BACK




SAGARIKA LEFT RELUCTANTLY

SO I WON'T BE
PRESENT
AT LE MADANA
S WORSHIP PER

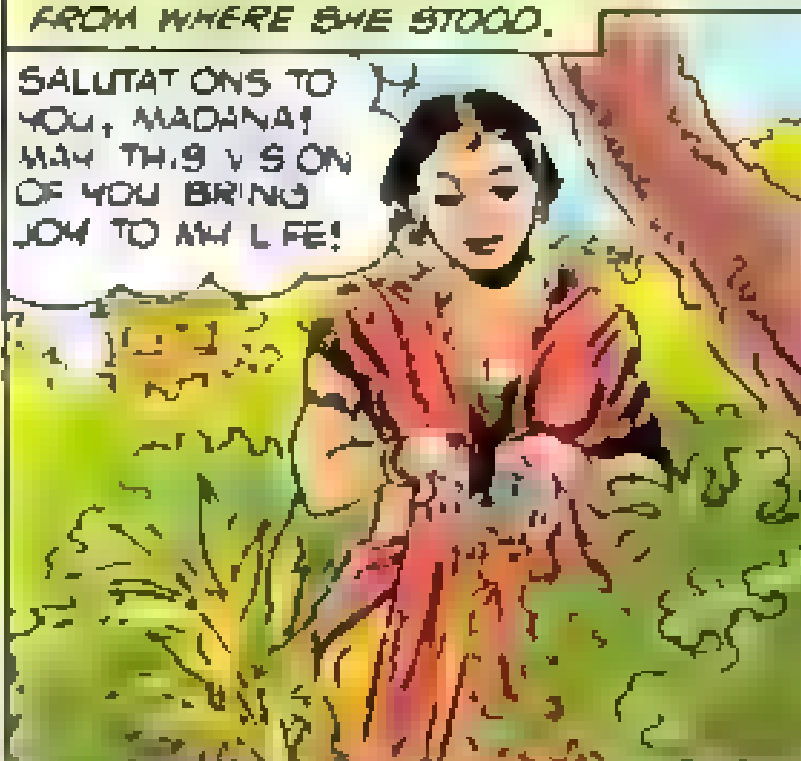


SUDDENLY SAGARIKA SAW THE KING —




OH! IN THIS COUNTRY MADANA COMES IN PERSON TO BE WORSHIPPED. IN ANOTHER COUNTRY WE HAVE ONLY HIS IMAGE TO WORSHIP!

THEN SAGARIKA OFFERED HER FLOWERS FROM WHERE SHE STOOD.



SALUTATIONS TO YOU, MADANA! MAY THIS VISION OF YOU BRING JOY TO MY LIFE!

THEN, AS SHE SET OUT FOR THE PALACE, SHE HEARD A GUARD CALLING OUT—




...MANY PRINCES ARE WAITING TO PAY THEIR RESPECTS TO KING UDAYANA...



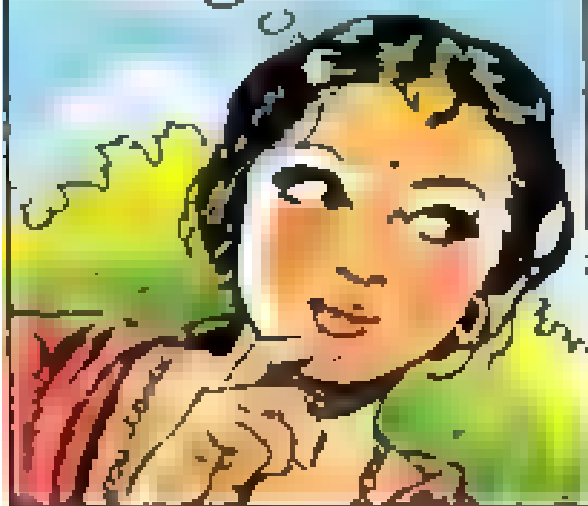
WHAT!

SAGARIKA TURNED BACK.



SO THAT WAS KING UDAYANA AND I AM BETROTHED TO HIM! THEN THE QUEEN MUST BE MY COUSIN, VASAVADATTA!

BUT IT CAN'T BE!
VASAVADATTA DIED
IN THE FIRE...



AS UDAYANA AND VASAVADATTA PASSED BY —



HOW
HELPLESS
I AM. I CAN'T
EVEN LOOK
UPON HIM, LET
ALONE TALK
TO HIM.

UDAYANA'S FACE HAUNTED SAGARIKA
AND SHE HARDLY SLEPT THAT NIGHT.
THE NEXT MORNING SHE WENT TO
THE GARDEN HOUSE TAKING WITH HER
A DRAWING BOARD, BRUSHES AND
COLOURS.



I SAW HIM BUT
FOR A MOMENT. YET
MY HEART YEARNS
FOR HIM.

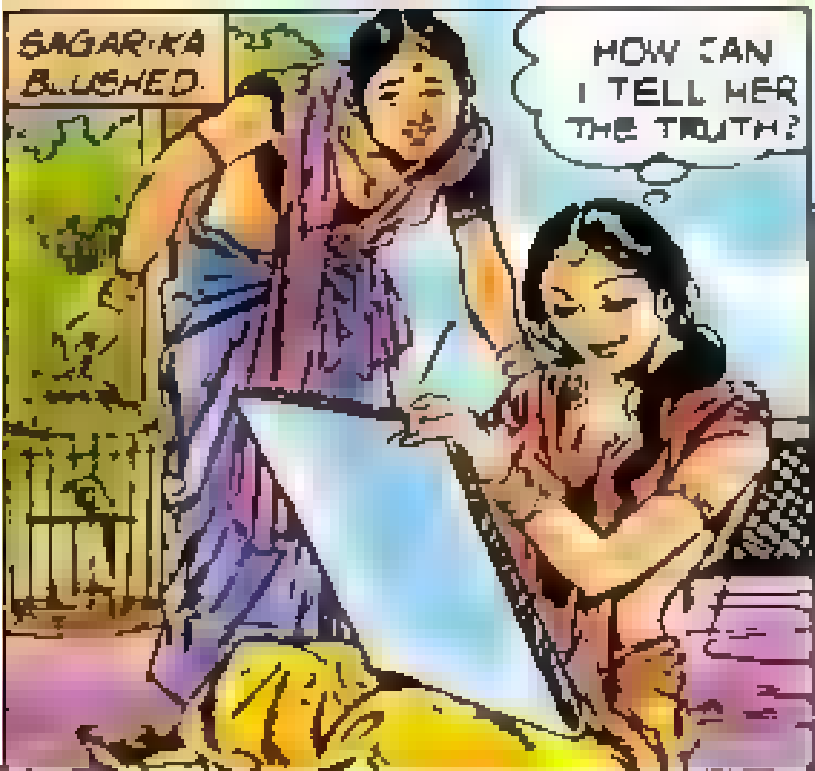
AS SHE SAT DOWN AND PAINTED A
PICTURE OF KING UDAYANA FROM
MEMORY

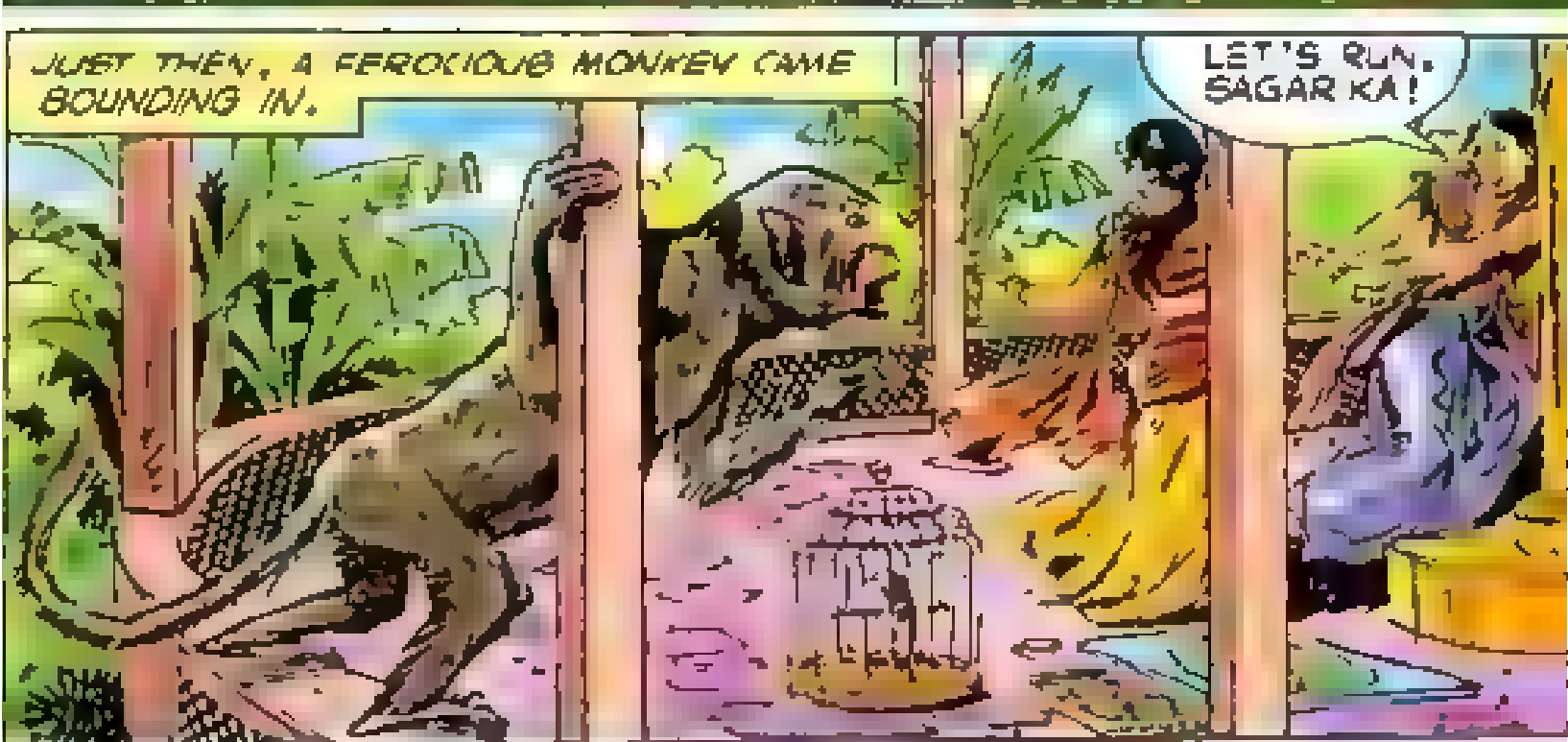
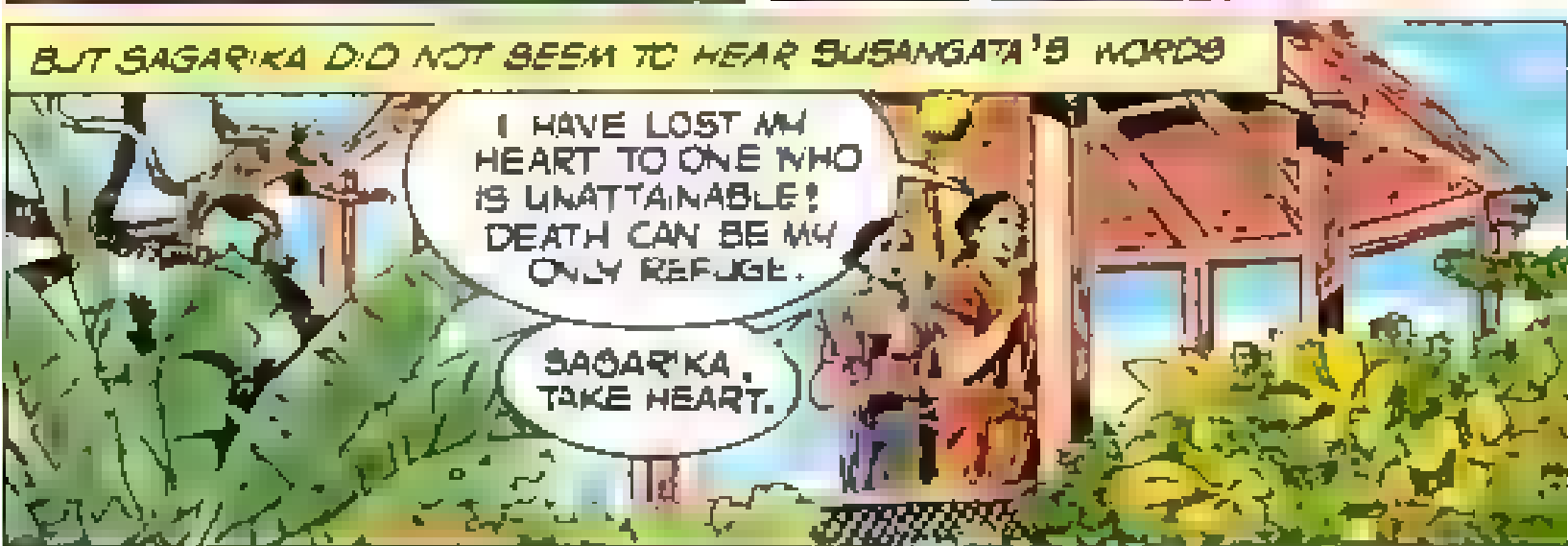
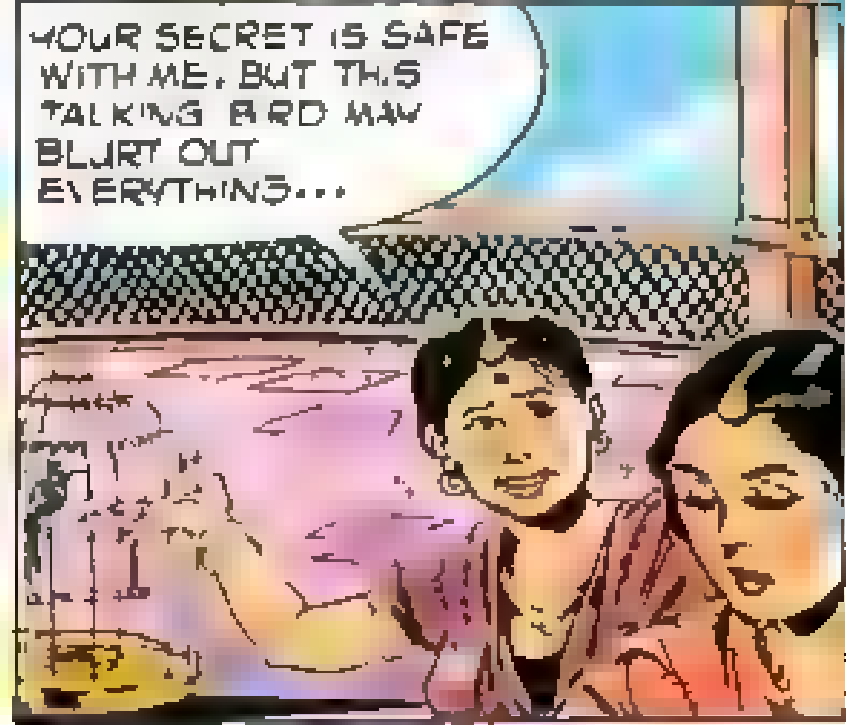
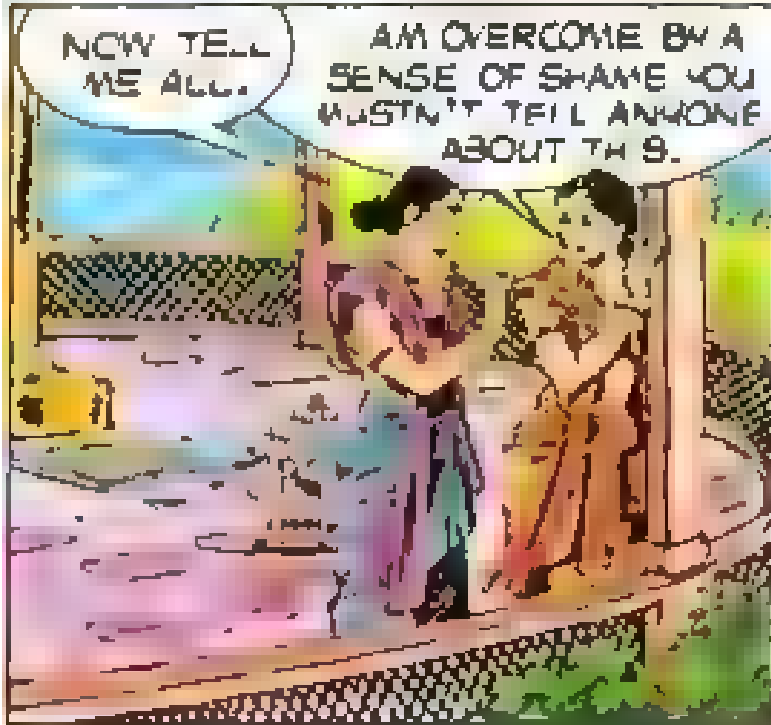


... SUSANGATA CREPT UP
FROM BEHIND HER —

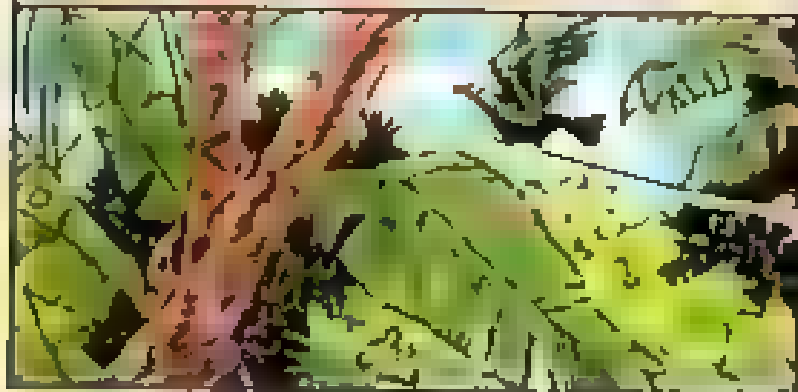


WHAT ARE YOU
PAINTING,
SAGARIKA?





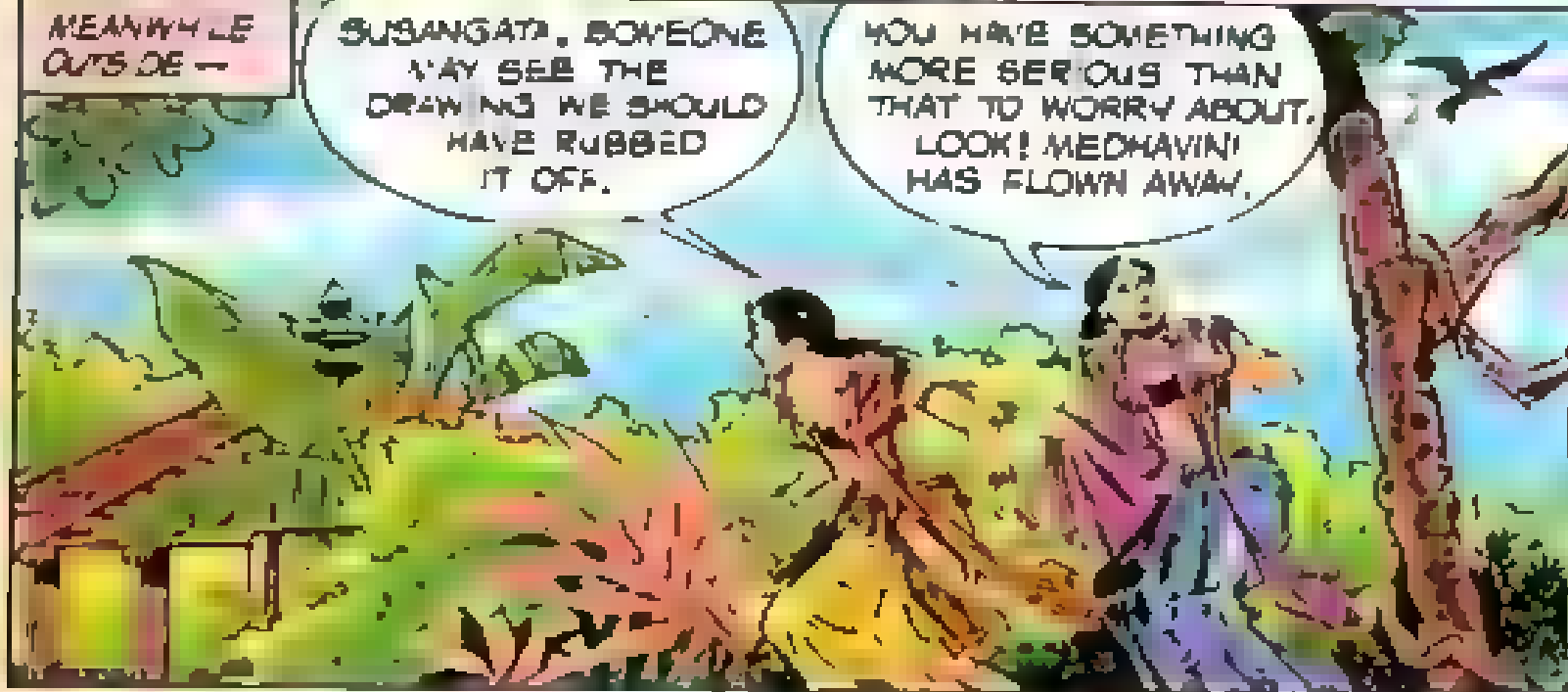
ATTRACTED BY THE FOOD IN THE CAGE, THE MONKEY
OPENED IT. THE FRIGHTENED BIRD FLEW OUT.



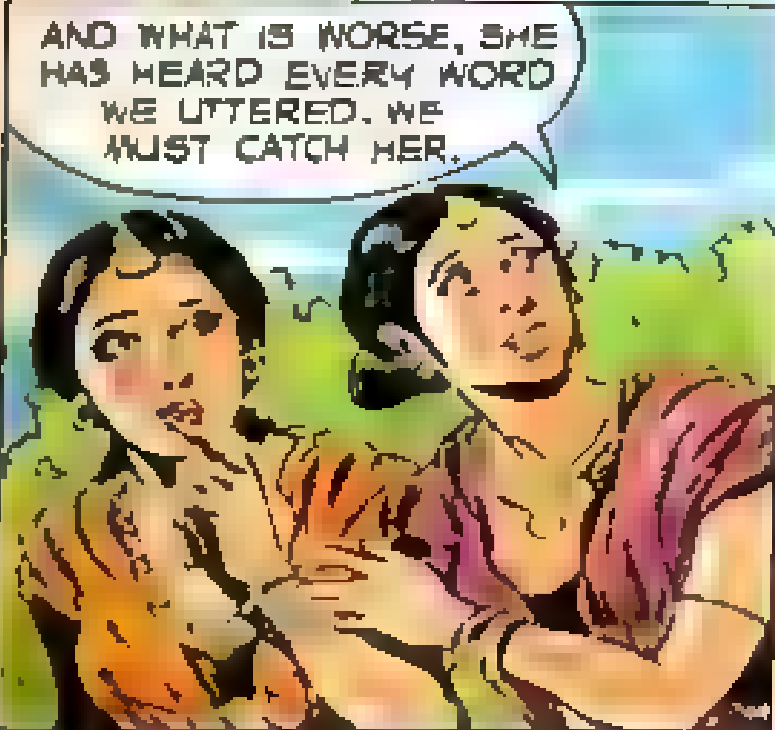
MEANWHILE
OUTSIDE —

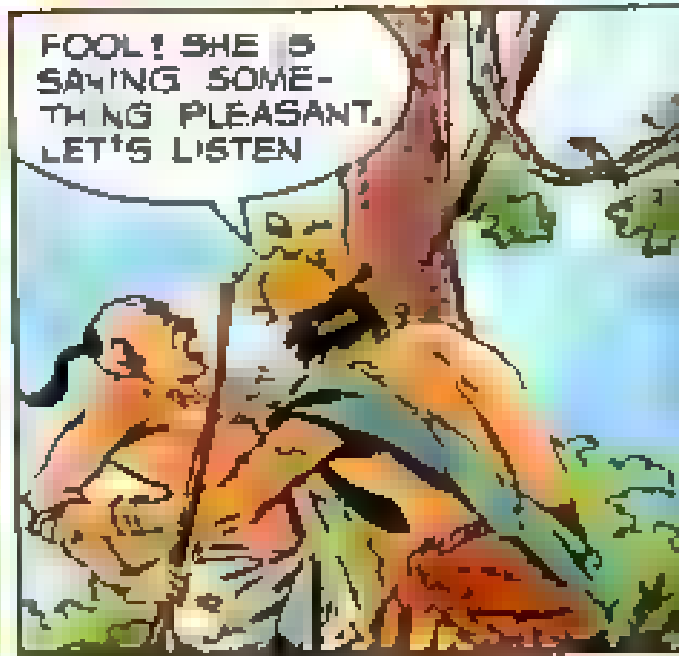
SUSANGATA, SOMEONE
MAY SEE THE
DRAWING WE SHOULD
HAVE RUBBED
IT OFF.

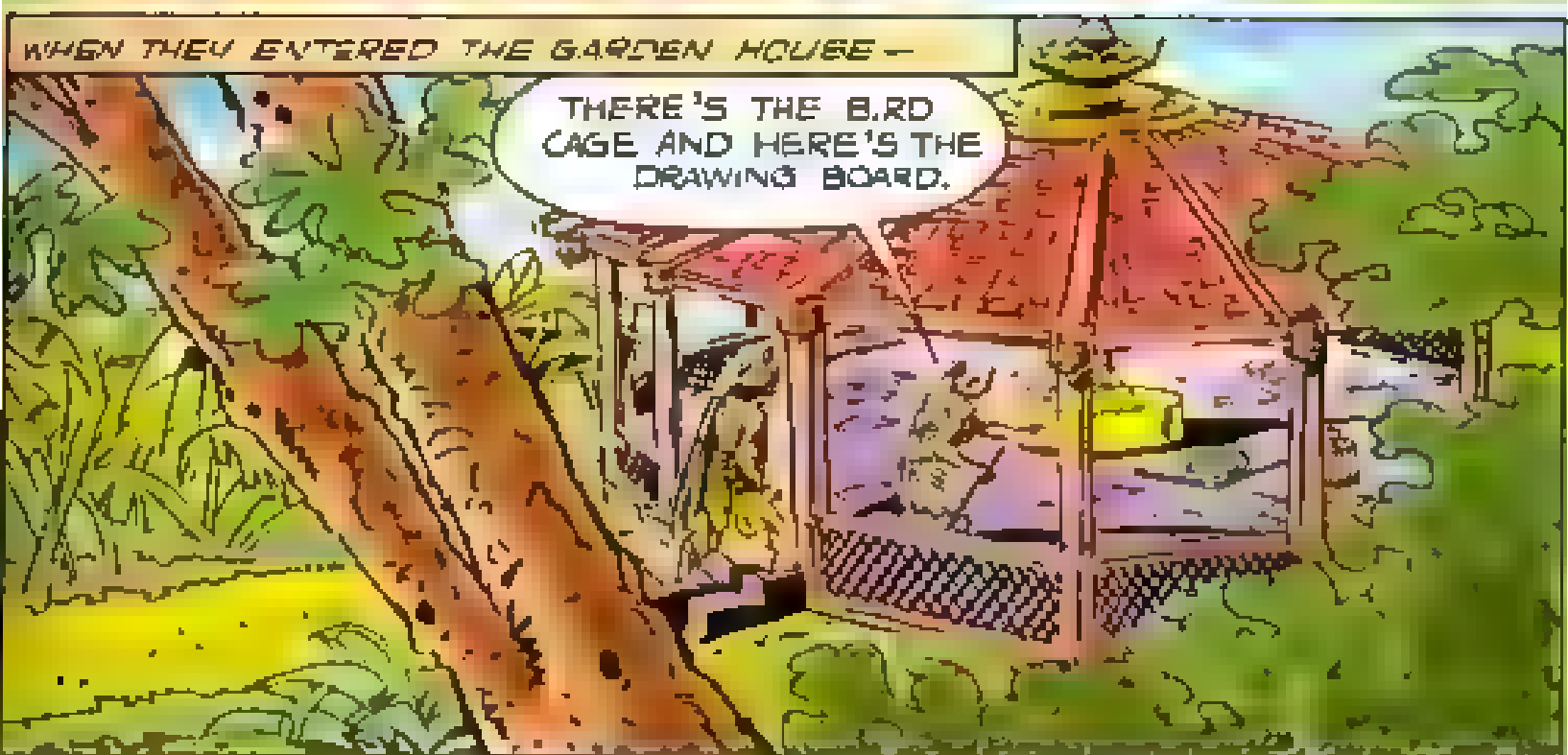
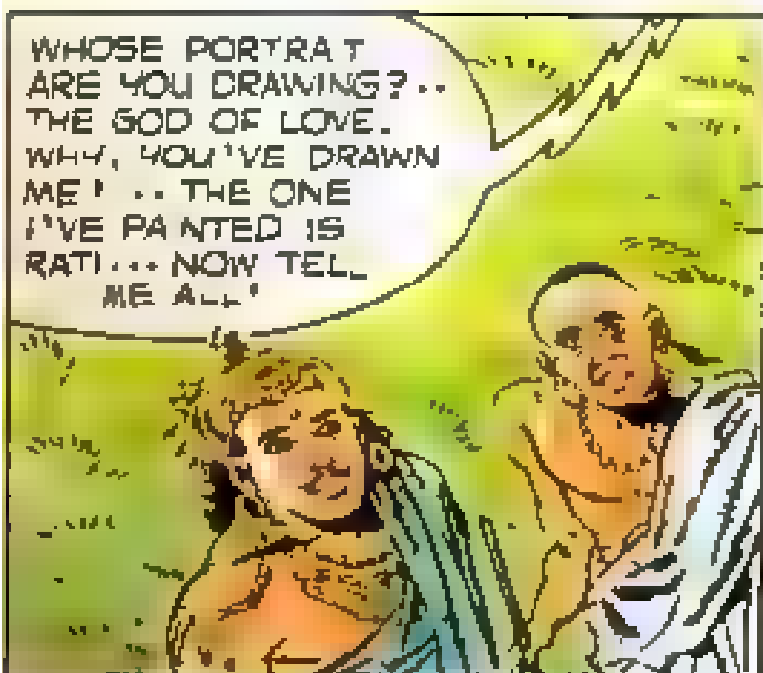
YOU HAVE SOMETHING
MORE SERIOUS THAN
THAT TO WORRY ABOUT.
LOOK! MEDHAVINI
HAS FLOWN AWAY.



AND WHAT IS WORSE, SHE
HAS HEARD EVERY WORD
WE UTTERED. WE
MUST CATCH HER.







MEANWHILE SAGARKA AND BUSANGATA NOT FINDING THE BIRD, WERE RETURNING TO THE GARDEN HOUSE FOR THE PAINTING.

THAT IS VASANTAKA SPEAKING. THE KING MUST BE HERE, TOO. LET'S HIDE AND LISTEN TO THEM.

IT IS YOUR PORTRAIT!
AND THAT OF A MAIDEN TOO!



MEANWHILE UDAYANA HAD TAKEN THE PAINTING




O UDAYANA,
YOU SEEM
SPELLBOUND!
WHY DOES
THE PORTRAIT
HOLD SUCH
FAST NATION
FOR YOU?



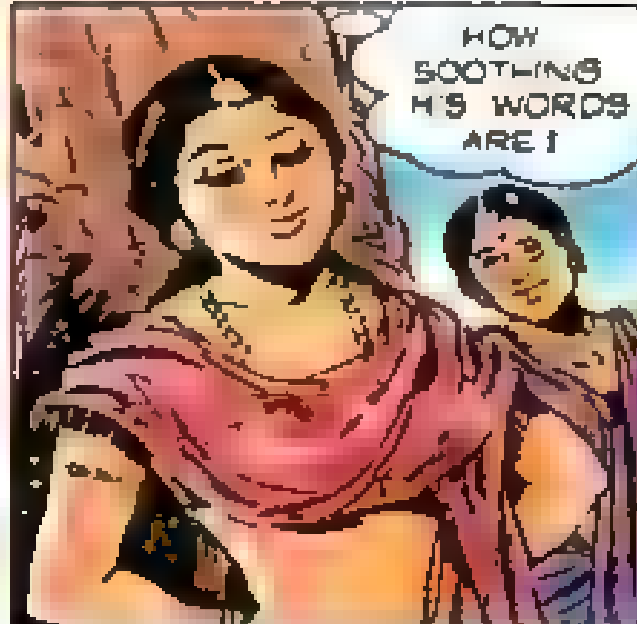
SAGARIKA HELD HER BREATH

MY LIFE
DEPENDS ON HIS
ANSWER. WHAT
WILL HE SAY?







THIS MAIDEN EXCELS
LAKSHMI IN GRACE. SHE
HAS CAPTIVATED MY
HEART.



HOW
SOOTHING
HIS WORDS
ARE!




I MUST FIND
A WAY OF
BRINGING THE
KING AND MY
FRIEND
TOGETHER



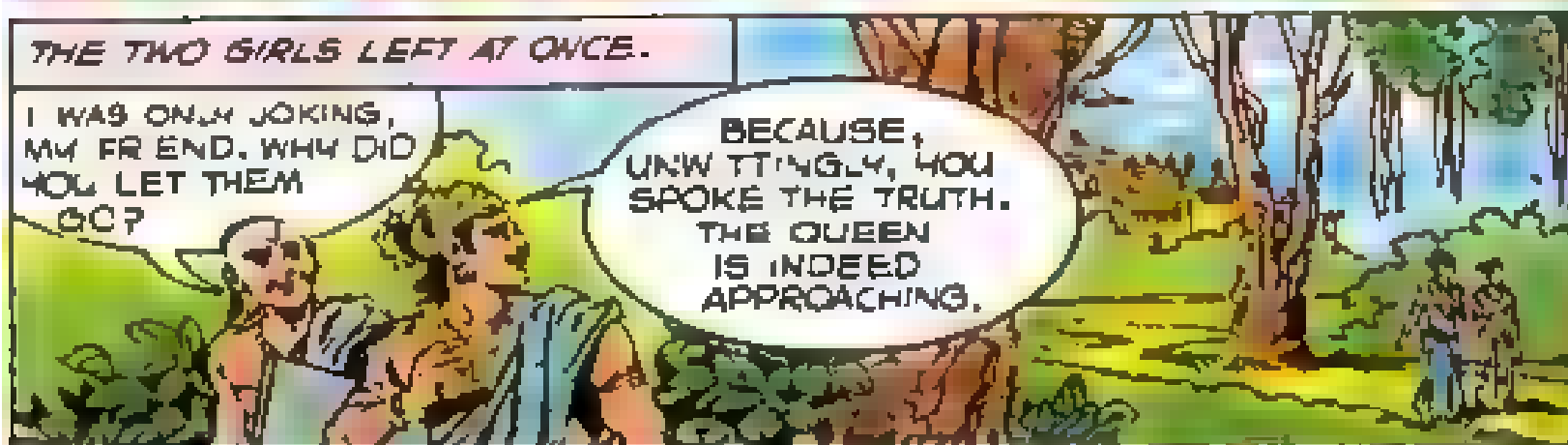
SAGAR KA, WAIT
HERE. I WILL
GO AND GET THE
PORTRAIT.

ALL RIGHT,
BUT PLEASE COME
BACK SOON.

SUSANGATA WENT INTO THE GARDEN HOUSE AND CAME OUT AFTER A LITTLE WHILE WITH THE KING AND VASANTAKA.



THE KING IS DOING
THIS WAY! I HOPE
SUSANGATA HASN'T
TOLD HIM IT WAS
I WHO DREW HIS
PORTRAIT.



BUT THE CLUMSY VASANTAKA DROPPED THE PORTRAIT

MY LORD, I CAME THIS WAY TO SEE IF THE NAVAMALUKA CREEPER HAS BLOSSOMED

LET'S GO TOGETHER.



KANCHANA MALA, THE QUEEN'S COMPANION, PICKED UP THE PORTRAIT AND SHOWED IT TO THE QUEEN.

IT'S MY LORD AND SAGARIKA!



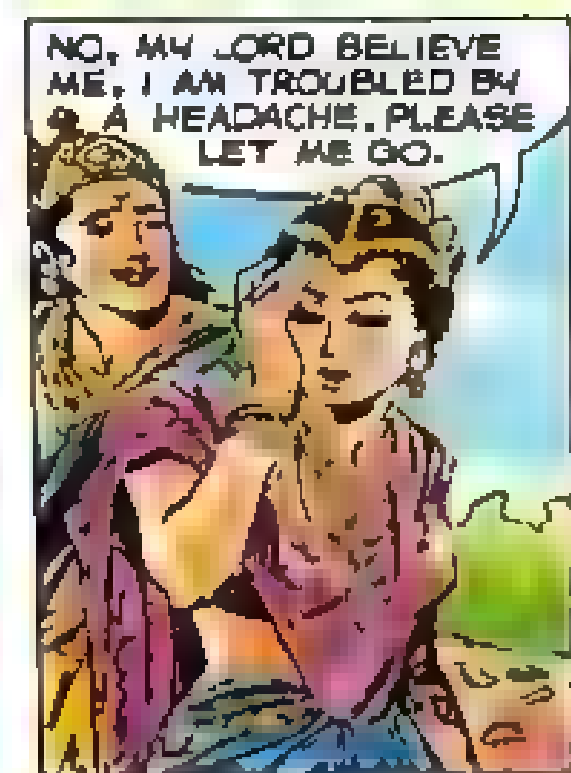
MY LORD, WHO HAS DRAWN THIS?



I TOLD THE KING THAT A SELF PORTRAIT IS DIFFICULT TO DO. HE DISAGREED - AND TO PROVE HIS POINT HE DREW HIS OWN PORTRAIT.

AND THE GALT





THE NEXT DAY VASANTAKA
MET SUBANGATA.

SUBANGATA, MY
FRIEND PINES FOR
SAGARIKA. CAN'T
YOU DO SOMETHING
ABOUT IT?

THIS EVENING I WILL
BRING SAGARIKA TO THE
MAHAVI BOWER, DRESSED
IN THE QUEEN'S
ROBES AND MYSELF
WILL BE IN KANCHANA
MALA'S DRESS.

LITTLE DO THEY REALISE
THAT KANCHANA MALA, WHO
HAPPENED TO BE PASSING
BY HAD HEARD EVERY WORD.

SHE TOLD THE QUEEN WHAT SHE HAD OVERHEARD—

CAN'T
BELIEVE
IT!

YOU WILL,
IF YOU VISIT THE
MAHAVI BOWER
THIS EVENING

THAT EVENING AT THE
MAHAVI BOWER—

SUBANGATA, YOU LOOK
QUITE CHARMING DRESSED
IN KANCHANA MALA'S
CLOTHES AND SAGARIKA
LOOKS JUST LIKE THE
QUEEN. COME, THE
KING IS WAITING

WHEN VASANTAKA LED THEM TO UDAYANA-



MY DEAR
BASAR KA...

LOOK CAREFULLY,
MY LORD! DOES
EVERYONE LOOK
LIKE SAGAR KA
TO YOU?

YOU,
VASAVADATTA!



VASAVADATTA, SHOW
COMPASSION. PARDON
ME FOR ONCE.



WITHOUT SAYING ANOTHER WORD,
VASAVADATTA WENT AWAY.

VASAVADATTA
LOVES ME. SHE
MUST BE HEART-
BROKEN. SHE
MAY EVEN KILL
HERSELF



MEANWHILE, SAGAR KA APPROACHED THE MAHARAJA
BOYER TO ASK FOR THE QUEEN'S CLOTHES



SHOULDN'T
HAVE AGREED TO
COME HERE. IT
IS IMPROPER.







AND I BROUGHT
HIM HERE ONLY
BECAUSE
THOUGHT IT
WAS YOU



AND HERE IS THE
PROOF LOOK AT
THIS NOOSE!

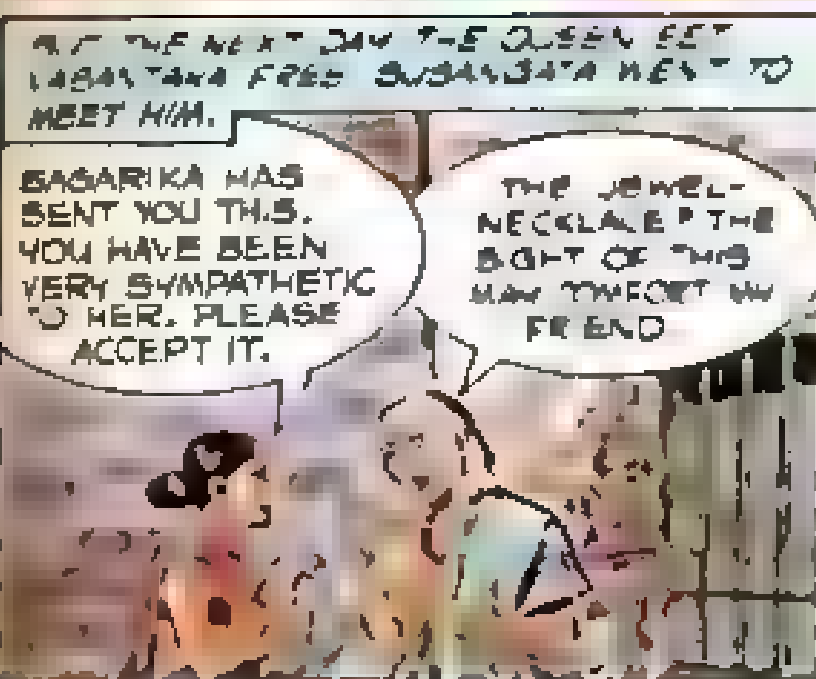
KANCHANA
MALA, AND
HIM WITH
THIS VERY
NOOSE



AND TAKE AWAY
SAGARIKA AND LOCK
HER UP.

HOW UNFORTUNATE
I AM NOT TO HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO DIE AS I
WISHED

AND KANCHANA MALA LED
VASANTAKA AND SAGARIKA AWAY AS
UDAYANA WATCHED HE, PLEASANTLY



AT THE NEXT DAY THE QUEEN SET
VASANTAKA FREE SUGANDHA WENT TO
MEET HIM.

SAGARIKA HAS
SENT YOU THIS.
YOU HAVE BEEN
VERY SYMPATHETIC
TO HER. PLEASE
ACCEPT IT.

THE JEWEL-
NECKLACE THE
GIFT OF THIS
MY FINEST
FRIEND



UDAYANA TOOK THE NECKLACE TO
KING UDAYANA —

VASANTAKA, YOU MUST
PUT IT ON. LOOKING AT IT,
I SHALL TRY TO
TAKE COURAGE

LATER IN THE AFTERNOON, A MAGICIAN FROM UDAYIN CAME TO THE PALACE TO PERFORM BEFORE KING UDAYANA AND QUEEN VASAVADATTA.

HERE YOU SEE BRAHMA,
VISHNU AND MAHESHWARA,
AND THERE — THE
APSBARAS DANCING.

YOU FOOL, SHOW
SAGAR KA IF YOU
WANT TO PLEASE
THE KING!

JUST THEN AN ATTENDANT CAME IN

I BEG YOUR PARDON FOR
INTERRUPTING, YOUR
MAJESTY, BUT VASUBHUTI,
THE MINISTER FROM
SIMHALA, SEEKS
AN AUDIENCE.

MY UNCLE'S
MINISTER! HE
SHOULD SEE
HIM AT ONCE!

BUT, YOUR MAJESTY,
YOU HAVEN'T SEEN
MY BEST ITEM!
PERMIT ME....

LATER, NOT
NOW.

THEN VASUBHUTI ENTERED AND PAID HIS RESPECTS TO UDAYANA.

I BRING BAD NEWS:
OUR SHIP HAS SUNK.
ONLY YOUR ENVOY AND
I MANAGED TO SURVIVE.
YOUR BETROTHED,
PRINCESS RATNAVALI,
WHOM WE WERE
BRINGING TO KAUSHAMBI
WAS DROWNED IN
THE STORMY SEA.

MY BETROTHED...

MY DEAR
COUSIN!
NO!!

JUST THEN—

FIRE! FIRE!
THERE IS A FIRE IN
THE INNER
APARTMENT.

MY LORD! SAVE
SAGARIKA! HER HANDS
AND FEET HAVE BEEN
BOUND ON MY ORDERS.

UDAYANA DASHED INTO THE INNER APARTMENTS.

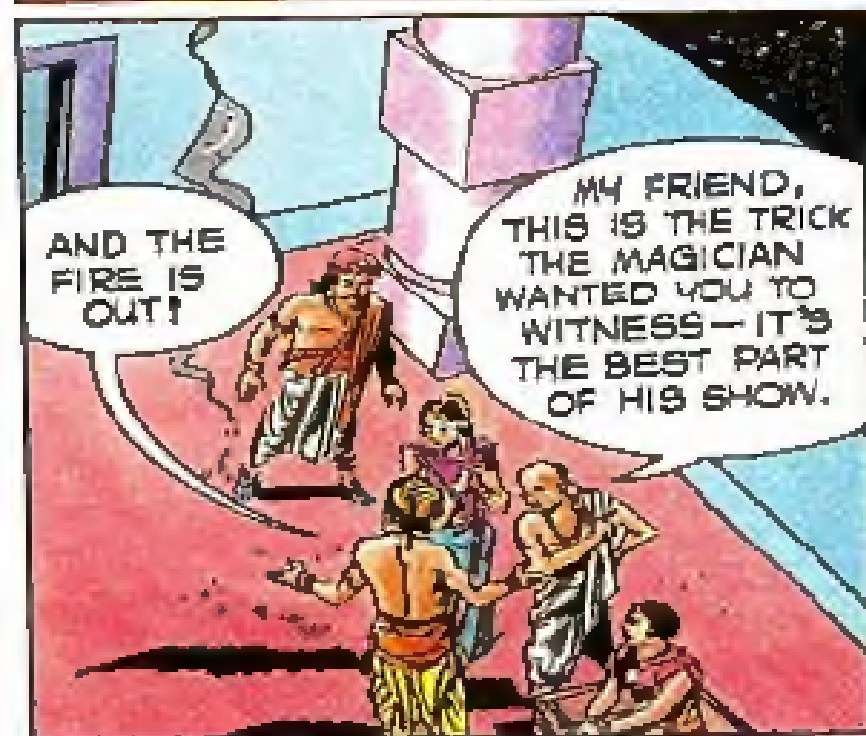
SAGARIKA!

BUT... BUT... WHAT
KIND OF FIRE IS THIS?
NOT EVEN MY HAIR
IS SINGED!



AND THE
FIRE IS
OUT!

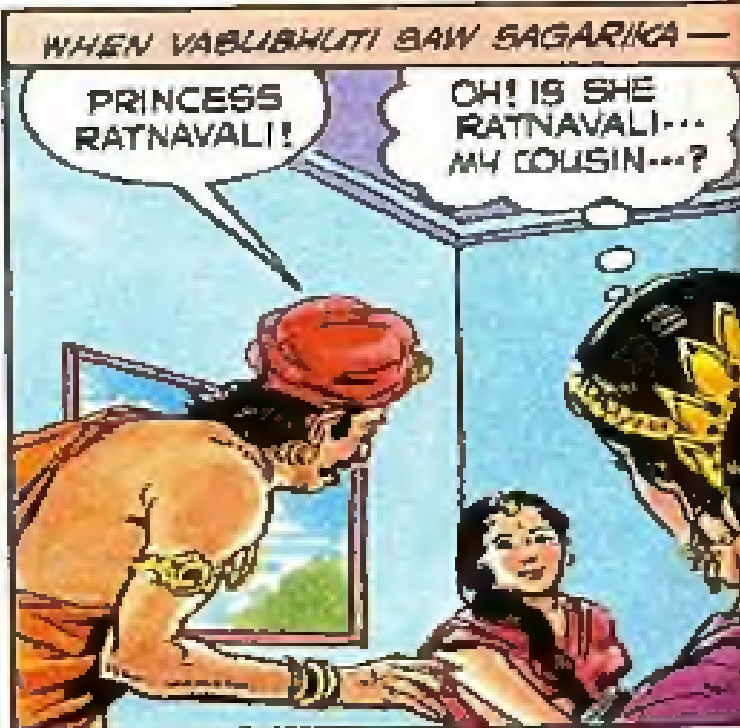
MY FRIEND,
THIS IS THE TRICK
THE MAGICIAN
WANTED YOU TO
WITNESS — IT'S
THE BEST PART
OF HIS SHOW.



WHEN VABUBHUTI SAW SAGARIKA —

PRINCESS
RATNAVALI!

OH! IS SHE
RATNAVALI...
MY COUSIN...?



MY LORD, I AM
ASHAMED OF MY-
SELF. FREE
HER OF THOSE
BONDS.

I'LL DO
AS YOU WISH,
DEAR.



THEN VASUBHUTI EXPLAINED HOW RATNAVALI CAME TO BE BETROTHED TO KING UDAYANA ON THE INITIATIVE TAKEN BY VAUGANDHARAYANA.

MY LORD, I WONDER WHY VAUGANDHARAYANA TOLD US NOTHING.

HE MUST HAVE HAD HIS REASONS. WE'LL SEND FOR HIM.

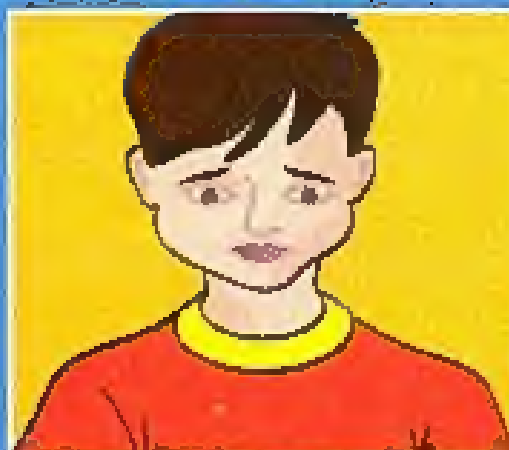
VAUGANDHARAYANA CAME AT ONCE —

I HEARD A SAGE PROPHECY THAT THE MAN WHO MARRIES RATNAVALI WILL BECOME THE GREATEST OF KINGS...

... AND THAT'S WHY I TRIED TO BRING ABOUT A MARRIAGE BETWEEN YOU, MY LORD, AND THE PRINCESS OF SIMHALA.

THEN VASAVADATTA LED RATNAVALI TO UDAYANA.

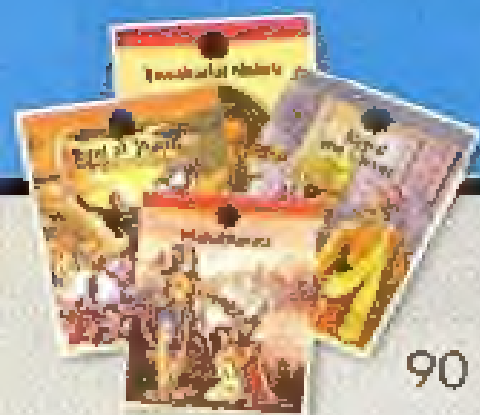
MY LORD, ACCEPT MY COUSIN AS YOUR WIFE.



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